Liza Gashi's Emphasis on Ethics Within the Kosovo Government

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Abstract. This article describes ethical dimensions within the work of Ms. Liza Gashi, Deputy Minister of the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. This includes a specific focus on nation branding and issues having to do with diaspora diplomacy. The Public Relations Society of America's Public Relations Code of Ethics and Sherry Baker and David Martinson's T.A.R.E.S. framework are two examples of such ethical aspects. It emphasizes being truthful, authentic, respectful, equitable, and socially responsible. Her functioning within the larger context of the foundations for the Republic of Kosovo and its 2008 declaration of independence is described. The content analysis methodology corresponds with the clarity of results.

Keywords: Ethics, Kosovo, public relations, governmental functions, foreign affairs.

INTRODUCTION

The United States is a relatively young country in contrast with most countries around the world. With the founding in 1776, this has left minimal time for the U.S. to have a centuries-old historical context that most other countries have. The Balkans offer an illustration of this with nations that have long rich traditions within which their cultures have evolved like fine wine. These evolutions allow for celebrations of the human condition but they also can reveal dark and sinister histories steeped in centuries-old ethnic hatreds that periodically surface and wreak havoc across the land. Such is the case regarding the tug of war that has existed between Serbs and Albanians in (what is now, 2022) Kosovo.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the break-up of the former Yugoslavia in 1992, this opened the door for Serbs to reassert their claim to Kosovo under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic. The Serbs viewed their occupation of Kosovo as a liberation ... stressing the expression that "we with the sword will regain the freedom that was lost with the sword" [4, p. 133]. The reengagement was extensively relentless. Serbian forces that returned to Kosovo remembered how they were treated by the Albanians when they retreated in 1915, and the Albanians remembered how they were treated by the Serbs in 1912 and 1913.... There were massacres of Albanians that numbered in the thousands [15, p. 273].

Both sides of the issue, Serb and Albanian, will speak of centuries-old battles as if they were yesterday. On June 28, 1989, which was the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Milosevic stressed the memory of the Serbs who had fought so valiantly in years past and then proclaimed "Six centuries later, again we are in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, though such things should not be excluded yet" [22, p. 77].

Later that year in November 1989, Milosevic spoke to a rally that numbered hundreds of thousands in Usce, Belgrade, "Every nation has a love which eternally warms the heart. For Serbia it is Kosovo. That is why Serbia will remain in Serbia" [22, p. 66]. The Albanians assert a similar claim stressing their perspective and from this has simmered ethnic tensions that have periodically erupted over the centuries.

Approximately 90 percent of Serbians are Christians. "The overwhelming majority of Kosovo Albanians are of Muslim background ... somewhere between two-thirds to 89 percent of the country's citizens have a Muslim background. ... Albanians tend to have a more relaxed view of religion than most other Muslim peoples" [11, p. 8]. This

religious distinction has provided a recognizable dividing line between the Serbs and Albanians. It is a division that can be manipulated by political forces who seek to promote division regarding the message they are espousing.

The Serbian military capabilities were stronger at that time given the militaristic priorities stressed in Serbia. In 1992, Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova expressed "We are not certain how strong the Serbian military presence in the province actually is, but we do know that it is overwhelming. . . . We believe it is better to do nothing and stay alive than to be massacred" [27, p. 264].

Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic was pleased that the Albanians acknowledged this reality. However, his glee was buffered later the same year when U.S. President George Bush conveyed a message to Milosevic stressing "In the event of a conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian actions, the U.S. will be prepared to employ military force against Serbians in Kosovo and Serbia proper" [7, p. 3]. This put the Serbs on notice that their incursions against the Albanians would not be tolerated.

Secretary of State Madeline Albright reflects on the U.S. thinking at the time about the Albanian cause as championed by the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army). "I sympathized with their opposition to Milosovic, understood their desire for independence, and accepted that force was sometimes necessary for a just cause to prevail" [1, p. 386].

The ensuing bloodletting by the Serbians against the Albanians was barely comprehendible. Large-scale ethnic cleansing persisted. The Serbian atrocities against the Albanians were relentless. "Tens of thousands of Albanians from two districts of Prishtina were rounded up and deported at gunpoint, by train, to Macedonia . . . Serbian paramilitaries, many of whom consisted of men released from prison on the condition they serve, rampaged across the countryside killing, looting and torching homes . . . some 1.45 million Kosovo Albanians were displaced" [8, p. 6].

The mass media reporting of the Serbian atrocities served to generate international outrage against the Serbs. "One of the worst single massacres by Serbian forces was of between 345 and 377 Albanian men (and some boys) from surrounding areas, murdered in the village of Meja . . . many of the bodies were exhumed, and with hundreds of others—some 836 in total—reburied. . . . One month later, Milosovic and four others were indicted by the U.N.'s Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal in The Hague for what had happened in Kosovo" [8, p. 9]. Again, the mass media reporting of such events set the stage for international reaction.

The United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) engaged in military action against the Serbs, and this resulted in Albanians eventually taking control of Kosovo. It was a vivid test of wills that resulted in the ongoing controversy. The Serbian government asserted that during the months after the end of the war large towns in Kosovo were emptied of Serbs, and it was widely understood that soon there would be no Serbs left [21].

METHODOLOGY

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) structure stressed the creation of four so-called pillars. . . . Pillars one and two were comprised of civil administration, police, and justice that were run directly by UNMIK, while economic reconstruction was addressed under the auspices of the European Union and institution building governed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [25]. This framework allowed for a coherent governance framework for Kosovo.

Martti Ahtisaari, former president of Finland, drew up a plan at the request of the United Nations regarding the future of Kosovo. In it, he spoke of a "supervised independence" within which he clarified that "the only viable option for Kosovo is independence, to be supervised for an initial period by the international community" [26]. The Ahtisaari plan was commensurate with "the EU's (European Union) advice and support in the political process as well as in promoting overall EU coordination and coherence in Kosovo, including in the area of rule of law" [5].

The Americans were recognized as supporting and providing assistance in the writing of the Kosovo declaration of independence. It clearly is in line with the tenets of the Ahtisaari Plan. The Declaration of Independence reads "We declare Kosovo to be a democratic, secular and multiethnic republic, guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equal protection under the law. We shall protect and promote the rights of all communities in Kosovo and create the conditions necessary for their effective participation in political and decision-making processes." [14].

Kosovo's declaration of independence and recognition have been traumatic for many Serbs. The Serbian people have long held a special place in their hearts for Kosovo. Serbians believe that Albanians have taken something that belongs to Serbians. However, most of the people who live in Kosovo at present, which is to say the Albanians, believe that independence is legitimate and that it corrects a historical wrong, being the Serbian conquest (Serbs say "liberation") of Kosovo in 1912. Serbs have consistently stressed that Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Albanians respond to that view that, if the Serbian view is correct, then the Serbian heart beats in a foreign body [11, pp. viii–ix].

The Kosovars have been eternally grateful for the role the U.S. has played in their protection from the Serbs, guidance with achieving independence, and support of Kosovars as they stand up for their country. In the capital city of Prishtina, one will see statues of Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, and Madeline Albright. Similarly, there are two

prominent roadways named in honor of Clinton and Dole. The Kosovars have a lightheartedness about them that is recognized in the location of a dress shop named "Hilary's" near the Bill Clinton statute.

The total population of Kosovo is roughly two million people. The governmental website reports that "Albanians constitute 92 percent of the population, Serbs 5.3 percent and others 2.7 percent." In addition to this, the resident population is about 800,000 people who compose the Kosovo diaspora (http://www.ks-gov.net/ESK/esk/english/english.htm).

The relationship between Kosovo and its 800,000 diaspora population is the focus of this report. This relationship is formally managed by the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. It can be interpreted via the framework offered within the discussion of diaspora and diplomacy and further impacted by the management of nation branding efforts by the Kosovo government. "In this context, diaspora is revitalized as a living transnational network that extends nation-state capacities and is now widely viewed by governments as a soft-power resource … to engage diaspora as agents of diplomatic goals" [12, p. 213].

With global modernization and increased opportunities for travel and immigration, focus on diaspora populations is receiving significant attention and is resulting in varied forms of outreach by home countries. "More than 30 states currently have full government ministries dedicated to diaspora affairs; they have varied capacities and remits, and sometimes a shared portfolio" [6, p. 494]. This has been the case in Kosovo. "The Kosovar Albanian diaspora has been a deeply radicalized global community, it played a key role in creating the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the late 1990s and maintained an intensive international campaign for political and material support for the KLA" [12, p. 219].

The proliferation of focus on diaspora populations in other countries such as India has spawned opportunities but it has also produced areas of disagreement. "Voting rights are often factious and can lead to tensions between the state and diaspora actors. After many years of advocacy and activism by Indian expatriates ('overseas Indians'), the government recently forwarded legislation to provide e-voting rights to citizens abroad … .The legislation has been disputatious and politically charged at home and abroad" [19, p. 4]. Similarly, the Kosovo diaspora had an impact on elections in Kosovo.

FINDINGS

The findings from this analysis can be presented in the following facts as statements of results. So, it can be said that the current understanding of diaspora is serving to redefine what citizenship is and has the potential to be. "Scholarship has grown fast on key aspects of the diaspora turn in state policies, analyzing ways in which policies are affecting conceptions of sovereignty and citizenship for example … key areas such as economic development, transnational politics, conflict transformation, humanitarian intervention and considering how new technologies of communication are changing the landscape of diaspora diplomacy" [10, p. 238].

The present day scenarios offer opportunities for reframing common conceptions. "There has emerged a complementary phenomenon, less commented upon but important in considering, (that is) diaspora diplomacy, the emergence of diaspora-centered programs and projects … as states consider how to manage diaspora in their midst as agents of Western models of government and economy" [28, p. 77]. This kind of political climate will engender change.

This opens the door to consideration for different forms of citizenship. "New information and communication technologies are reconfiguring the time and space of diaspora-state relations, radically altering spheres of communication and connectivity, and promoting decentralized networks of activity" [12, p.m. 221]. There are possibilities for significant changes in the political landscape and about notions of diplomacy. For example, "diaspora diplomacy is aligned with the broader transitioning towards forms of "stakeholder diplomacy" that are suited to a networked age of cross-sector collaboration" [29, p. 44]. E-management offers relevant illustration in this regard [3].

Looking ahead, we can recognize that "diaspora diplomacy, still a nascent field of public policy and study, is becoming more integrated into public diplomacy, with growing recognition and engagement of diaspora actors as not only significant stakeholders but important agents in foreign policy terrains" [23, p. 87]. All of this taken together points toward a reshaping of our understanding of what a nation is and the role of nation branding.

Nation branding is defined as "the application of corporate marketing concepts and techniques to countries, in the interests of enhancing their reputation in international relations" [13, p. 354]. Some approaches to nation branding have stressed the importance of the symbolic values associated with the product (nation) and have led to countries emphasizing distinctive characteristics. The branding and image of a nation-state "and the successful transference of this image to its exports is just as important as what they actually produce or sell" [24, p. 74]. Many nations seek to improve their image and reputation because this can significantly influence their economic vitality [18, p. 169], and such economic vitality can benefit overall organizational standing [17].

The dynamics associated with nation branding have their roots in the craft of public relations.

Public relations are the practice of managing and disseminating information in order to affect public perceptions [9, p. 8]. It frequently entails attempting to reach target audiences by employing public interest subjects or other types of informational news [20, p. 11]. The relevance

of this in financial terms is clear and aligns with other aspects of governmental fiscal planning [16].

The initiative for advancing the Republic of Kosovo nation brand and related diaspora diplomacy objectives is guided by Ms. Liza Gashi, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. Ms. Gashi is a government executive, innovator, social entrepreneur, and analyst with experience in migration and diaspora policies, public and digital diplomacy, civic engagement, and advocacy.

She is the founder and former executive director of GERMIN, a regional non-profit organization and leader specializing in engaging diaspora communities in advancing, developing, and democratizing their countries in the Western Balkans. Ms. Gashi and GERMIN have been at the forefront of shaping public discourse on diaspora issues and have consistently advocated for advancing the policies, legislation, and institutional approaches of Kosovo and Albania to engage their diaspora.

Ms. Gashi also established KosovoDiaspora.org, a digital engagement and diplomacy platform that has promoted Kosovo's citizenship internationally through the success stories of the Kosovo Diaspora. She also founded and led United World College (UWC) Kosovo, an educational movement that helped send talented young leaders to the world's top educational institutions that are part of the UWC network.

Ms. Gashi's experience in policy and research on international development, migration, and foreign policy issues includes international and local organizations such as the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPA), International Organization for Migration (IOM), University of Applied Sciences Bon-Rhein Sieg, and International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX).

Ms. Gashi earned an M.A. in Public Administration at Arizona State University and a B.A. from Wartburg College (Iowa) in International Relations, Political Science, and Spanish. She also completed academic programs at the United World College in Costa Rica and the National University of Córdoba in Argentina. She is fluent in Albanian, English, and Spanish.

Her rich background is well seasoned with the aforementioned education, positions, and experiences. This has allowed Liza to create and implement varied initiatives associated with nation brand planning and execution as means to establish and maintain relations with the Kosovo diaspora. She acknowledges the importance of stressing fundamental principles in her efforts so as to produce results that resonate with soundness and consistency of thought. Key among those principles are ethical practices that can be used as measures for evaluating idea development and implementation.

Given the public relations dimension of her nation branding and diaspora diplomacy, it is only natural that she refers to the relevance of the Public Relations Code of Ethics. It stresses the importance of advocacy, being honest, maintaining levels of expertise, operating independently, and being loyal and fair.

Public Relations Code of Ethics

The Public Relations Student Society of America has developed a set of fundamental principles that public relations professionals should consider and emphasize in their overall business relationships and organizational structures. These principles are as follows:

Advocacy: Serving as responsible advocates for the individuals whose interests they represent in order to advance the public interest. This often happens via presenting a wide range of concepts, information, and points of view to enrich the public discussion.

Honesty: Taking an objective, fact-based approach to all situations and transparently presenting such opinions to the public.

Maintaining a knowledgeable viewpoint on the specialist expertise required for Public Relations representations. That entails making use of acquired information and expanding upon it through advancement, instruction, and study. Professionals should also increase their knowledge, reputation, and connections in order to effectively address a variety of audiences and sectors.

Independence: Strive to give fair conclusions for those who are represented and to be responsible for all of your acts.

Loyalty: Upholding a commitment to the customer while being aware of the need to continuously serve the public good.

Fairness: Treat every customer, employer, media outlet, rival, colleague, vendor, and member of the public with the utmost respect. preserving the right to free speech.

http://prsa.org/about/prsa-code-of-ethics

Liza shares how she is able to start with the general values expressed in the Public Relations Code of Ethics and sharpen the focus of her nation branding and diaspora diplomacy endeavors using the T.A.R.E.S. framework for evaluating the persuasive practices under consideration for implementation and assessment after being implemented.

The T.A.R.E.S. framework is a five-point test that stresses truthfulness, authenticity, respect, equity, and social responsibility. It evaluates ethical persuasion and provides boundaries having to do with persuasive practices.

T.A.R.E.S. Framework

Truthfulness (of the message) asks if I'm delivering my message in a factual, sincere, and correct manner. Does my method downplay or obfuscate the evidence? Am I maintaining a fictitious viewpoint or image? Does what I say persuade people to accept ideas that I do not?

The challenge of the persuader's authenticity is: Will the recipients of my message doubt my sincerity or intention with relation to what I am saying? Do I genuinely believe what I am saying, and will people who hear it benefit from it? Do I

appropriately support the person or thing I'm speaking out for in my statements?

Do I express viewpoints just out of self-interest or do I actually support the idea, the person, or the thing I'm trying to persuade you to buy? Are message consumers who are well-grounded, logical creatures to whom this is presented? What obligations do I have in terms of ethics when I provide such messaging?

Is my stance fair, impartial, and devoid of bias, asks equity (of the persuading appeal)? Have I spoken to those who I'm trying to persuade but who don't understand the issue or the claims? Do the messages I provide reflect the wants, needs, or worries of the people I'm trying to persuade?

For the benefit of everybody, social responsibility entails asking: Have I unjustly stereotyped those who are affected by my words or deeds? Will my words or deeds affect any people or organisations in the greater community? Will the positions I have maintained have any unfavorable effects? Have I emphasized viewpoints in a way that minimizes the contributions of people who are underrepresented in society? Are the emphasized positions conveyed to the various audiences who consume my communications in a responsible manner?

CONCLUSION

Liza shares how having such consistency of mission with regard to ethics in her leadership provides a sense of purpose that aligns with her personal and professional orientations. As such she mentors team members with regard to how they can use the Public Relations Code of Ethics and T.A.R.E.S. framework within their collective and individual endeavors. This helps to reaffirm the role of ethical standards within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. The structured emphasis on ethics becomes not only part of the Kosovo nation brand but also part of the Liza Gashi brand.

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